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CHURCH UNION

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NEWS AND VIEWS

FEBRUARY 1958

'The Autonomy of the Church'

CHURCH UNION

NEWS AND VIEWS

(New Series)

Vol. 3 | Organ of the Negotiating Committee for Church Union in North India and Pakistan | No. 1

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Subscription Rates : India and Pakistan ... ... Rs. 2/0 per year.
U. K. and Europe ... ... 3/6d per year.
U. S. A. and Canada ... ... 00.50 per year.

Published quarterly in February, May, August and November of each year.

Material should reach the Editor not later than 25th of the month previous to intended publication.

U. K. and Europe the subscription for new subscribers has had to be raised to 4/–shilling per year ; and that it may be paid through the Rev. Frank Short, Edinburgh House, 2 Eaton Gate, London S. W. 1.

Church Union

News and Views

(New Series)

Don't Let Union Surprise You

(Reproduced from 'The United Church Review', January 1958, by kind permission of the Editor).

IF the Plan of Church Union now before the U. C. N. I. and other denominations in North India and Pakistan is put into operation within a few years' time, and if (on the morning after its inauguration) you and your congregation find yourself in a new sort of Church —and find it in any way irksome—you will not be able to blame the General Assembly, its Executive Committee or its Church Union Committee for not bringing the union plans to your attention while there was still time to say No. The fault will be yours, and maybe your Church Council's! The Plan is printed, some regional language translations have been published or are about to be published, others are being prepared, and in many ways, by many Church voices, you have been urged to take the matter seriously, to acquaint yourself with what is proposed and to express your opinion (for or against) seriously and in the proper quarters.

We believe that very few people in the Church will want to say No to the proposals and to the union which they seek—but the hour is upon us when we must make up our minds, and make them up on a basis of informed thought about the Plan of Union as we now have it . . . Does this Church Union question concern you and your congregation, as well as your Church Council? It very obviously does . . . See that YOUR Council does something about it!

Church Union News

ON November 15th, 1957, the Secretary visited Jabalpur where the Disciples of Christ were meeting to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of their mission. He was able to have a talk about the Plan of Church Union with Dr. Virgil A. Sly, the Executive Secretary of the Division of World Mission of their United Christian Missionary Society, from Indianapolis, and to give a short talk to the delegates gathered there and to enjoy their fellowship.

On October 28th, the Secretary was able to meet both the Rev. D. B. Childe, Secretary of the Methodist Missionary Society, from London, and the Rev. C. F. Gribble, their General Secretary in Australia, as they were both visiting Varanasi (Banaras).

A leaflet giving "Some Questions for Group Discussion" on the Plan of Church Union has been prepared by the Rev. D. M. Kennedy of Wilson College, Bombay, for the use of S. C. M. branches and others. Copies may be obtained from the Administrative Secretary, S. C. M. House, 2 Mission Road, Bangalore 2; price 6 n. p.

At the Annual Conference of the Friends of Reunion at Oxford, from September 25th to 27th, 1957, the Rev. W. Stewart, Editor of Church Union News and Views, was one of the speakers, and gave an outline of the Plan

of Church Union in North India and Pakistan. Another conference dealing with the North India and Ceylon schemes was held at Dunford College in October.

A "Proposed Scheme of Church Union", prepared by a committee representing the Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches in Nigeria and the Cameroons was published in April last. It closely follows the South India model.

In Canada the Anglican Church and the United Church of Canada are exploring a way to union, securing "the continuance of the Episcopate in some constitutional form."

The Rev. W. Machin continues his keen interest in Church Union and is doing much both by speaking and writing to promote understanding of our Plan in the United Kingdom. He also attended the annual conference of the Friends of Reunion at Oxford.

T. D. S.

Dioceses and Episcopal Support

The Convener of the Sub-committee on Dioceses and Episcopal Support is planning to have an early meeting of the committee, and it is hoped that those who have strong opinions about the present proposals regarding dioceses and their support will forward their views to the committee through the appropriate channels.

M. C. S. A. and the N. India Plan of Union

The Methodist Church in Southern Asia, which is a negotiating body on the basis of the North India Plan, has two conferences in the South, the Hyderabad Conference and the South India Conference. The former works mainly in Telugu, and the latter in Kannada. The territory in which these two conferences are working is contiguous with that of the C. S. I. If the Methodist Church goes into Union with the Church of North India, these two conferences will be left without much fellowship with the Christians round about them. At the same time, these conferences will have little fellowship with the Church in North India. Further, the C. S. I. is doing great work in Telugu and Kannada speaking areas. Naturally these two conferences desire to co-operate with the C. S. I. in various pieces of Christian work. Therefore, the Executive Board of the Methodist Church has permitted these two conferences to hold informal conversations with the C.S.I. These two conferences meeting recently have appointed representatives to meet those of the C. S. I. and have informal talks on the problems of Union. The North India Negotiating Committee, meeting in Pachmarhi, has also approved these conversations. We hope that these talks will begin soon and we request your prayers in order that they may bear fruit. Incidentally, it may be stated that the Basel Mission in North Karnataka, which is working entirely in the Kannada area, has decided to join the C. S. I.

E. C. R.

Church Union in Western India

In the month of November the representatives of the Basel Mission, the Church of India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon and the Methodist Church in Southern Asia met informally in Belgaum to talk about Church Union in Western India. The Bishop of Bombay, the Right Reverend W. Q. Lash, and the President of the Karnataka Christian Council, the Venerable S. A. Mara were present.

The C. I. P. B. C. and the Methodists have work in the same area and use the same language,—Kannada. The talk was profitable to all concerned. It revealed some of the problems involved in union, and the advantages to be derived from it. We felt that the hand of God was leading us in the matter.

E. C. R.

Translations of the Revised Plan of Union

Please note that the price of the Hindi translation is 31 *n. p.* (5 as.), and *not* 20 n. p. as stated in the November issue. A summary of the Plan, prepared by the Rev. E. L. Wenger, and translated into Hindi, is also available, price 19 n. p. (3 as.), from the Yogi Press, Patna, or from the Rev. W. Solomon, Collier Memorial Hostel, Bankipore, Patna 4, Bihar.

The Gujarati translation is well under way, and it is hoped that it will be published in the near future. Further information may be obtained from the Rev. T. H. Lyle, I. P. Mission, Ellis Bridge, Ahmedabad 6, Bombay State.

The final revision of the draft of the Bengali translation is now being undertaken, and it is hoped that this will appear shortly.

Work is proceeding steadily in preparation for publishing the Marathi translation.

Twentyfour Parganas District Conference

A Conference on Church Union at "local level" covering one evening and the following morning was held at Canning for representatives from Churches in the Sunderban area of the 24 Parganas District (West Bengal), under the auspices of the district Comity Committee, on January 3 and 4. It was organized jointly by the Rev. Canon Naskar of the C. I. P. B. C. and by the Rev. J. N. Sircar of the Bengal Baptist Union. It was very encouraging that over a hundred persons attended from the churches of the area—mostly Anglican and Baptist, but including a few from the U. C. N. I. The meetings were held in the school building of St Gabriel's and everyone joined in evening and morning worship in the church. The Rev. C. C. Pande, Chairman of the Bengal Synod of the Methodist Church, was the guest speaker at the first meeting. He clearly outlined the essential points of the proposed Plan of Union, and ably answered many questions. The following morning the Rev. E. L. Wenger explained the significance of the Plan from the Baptist point of view; showing the features of the Plan that were welcome and indicating certain difficulties, but especially urging that every attempt be made to join in one another's worship, to work together and to arrange for occasional interchange of pulpits. The customs and forms of worship of others seem at first sight unattractive: we need to see the values that reside in unfamiliar forms. That so many were present is an encouraging sign of serious interest being taken in the Plan of Union. Union will not really be achieved by resolutions of central bodies, but by mutual understanding: and we may hope that this free and frank discussion together will lead to further exploration of the basic unity that underlies confessional differences.

E. L. W.

The Autonomy of the Church of North India and Pakistan

REV. C. C. PANDE

THE Plan of Church Union has come out after many years of consultation. Also, through much prayer and negotiation, better understanding has developed between the uniting Churches. The Church of North India/Pakistan will bring together the heritage and the experiences that we have gained through our separate existence. The Plan of Union has taken care to avoid any absorption of one Church by another. The Church of North India/Pakistan accepts the presbyteral, congregational and episcopal elements in Church order. "It is the intention of the Church of North India/Pakistan that full inter-communion and fellowship shall be maintained with each of the several Churches with which any of the uniting Churches was at the time of Union in communion, and the fact that any of these does not follow the rule of episcopal ordination will not prelcude the Church of North India/Pakistan from holding relations of communion and fellowship with it." (*Plan*, p. 33).

Also the Church "shall be an autonomous Church and free from any control, legal or otherwise, of any Church or Society external to itself." (*Plan*, p. 36).

The uniting Churches will be voting on the revised Plan, and I have every hope that all the seven negotiating Churches will enter into the Union. With great expectancy I look forward to the day of the inauguration of the Union.

Self-Support Before Union

I have, however, my own fears in our achieving autonomy. Each of our uniting Churches is receiving financial assistance from Missionary Societies or Mission Boards with their headquarters situated outside India Pakistan. The uniting Churches will enter into the union with the consent and good wishes of the Mission Boards and Societies that have established the Churches in India and Pakistan. The existing work of the

uniting Churches depends largely on the ncome of the overseas Churches, and this ıelp will be continued even after union. The pattern of the ministry set up in India ınd Pakistan is based on the structure of the ıigher economic condition of the Churches overseas, and has to be subsidised because of the very low economic situation, both of the Christian community in particular ınd of the country in general. Also there ıre a few nationals placed in higher administ-rative positions, who are in a reasonable degree of comfort, in keeping with the past traditions when the same positions were held by missionaries.

The uniting Churches must consider seriously before the inauguration of Union, how far each of them can meet the coming financial burden. The Churches must, before union, try to achieve a reasonable target of self-support for the support of the ministry ınd the normal Church work. The entire membership of the uniting Churches must be nformed of the step the Churches are going to take. Each member must be challenged to give more and to take a greater share in the support of the work. Unless the time we have before us is used for a greater effort to make known facts about the union, and the total membership is aroused to pray for it ınd to give for that for which they pray, I am afraid that after Union each of the uniting Churches will have to appear before their respective Mission Boards and Missionary Societies with much larger begging-bowls.

Foreign Aid Too Easily Achieved

In Church circles we have a feeling of complacency about the spiritual life of Christians. We say, our people are poor, so they must have help from the older Churches, and the work has to be supported for them Do we care to know what the people outside the Church say about our members ? I have ıeard outside people calling us ' Sahib's men ' ınd not God's people. Some of my readers may have heard similar remarks. It is easy to brush off these remarks as the foolish utterances of ignorant people. I believe that our people cannot support all the work of the Church. But they do not give as much as they should. This is not because our people ıre poor but because of the low spiritual level of our total membership. It is good to think that the money raised, either in India/Pakistan or abroad, is God's money and should be used in God's work. The giving of the older Churches has been guided by this principle. But what about our own people ? Money has come in much too quickly. Instead of depending on God and wrestling in prayer, and the people of God meeting together to pray in the name of the Lord of the Church, to supply its need, the congregation have avoided this fellowship and prayer. The man in an administrative position had only prayed on behalf of the members to the Mission Boards in his letters and the need had been supplied. Can we have a people of God by this method ? The low spiritual level is the greatest hindrance in the way of our self-support, not our poverty. God's money has been far too cheap for the Sahib's people. Our countrymen are not all fools when they say we are ' Sahib's people.'

Increase the Indigenous Ministry

There is a need for missionaries and mission money both in India and in Pakistan for the building up of the Church, and for the training of the ministry, etc. But the uniting Churches, before the establishment of the Church of North India/Pakistan, should make a planned effort to increase the indigenous ministry, at least to replace the missionaries now engaged in normal Church work. The uniting Churches can ask the missionary Societies to share a part of what is thus saved for the support of the national ministry.

Union will not solve our problems, therefore let us before union make plans in consultation with our Churches overseas, not only for the existing work but for extension and greater undertakings for the Lord of the Church. Reduction of work or lower stipends for the ministry will not strengthen the Church. We are not a business concern, but a Church, a living body of Christ, which must grow and extend. By forward movement, let us challenge the Churches to a deeper spiritual life. Any step towards retrenchment and withdrawal will destroy whatever spiritual life the Churches still have.

Grandmotherly Affection

The Mission Boards and Societies have complied with the requests from the uniting Churches by making an ever increasing appeal for help, both in men and money, from the members of the Church overseas. Their giving to younger Churches has been all in

love and for God's work. By constant giving, and too much love for God's children in the younger Churches, the overseas Churches have become something like the good old grandmother. The uniting Churches in India and Pakistan are considered as the baby in the pram.

The mission Boards have given to the uniting Churches a certain amount of autonomy, but like the old grandparents, they still think that the Mission representatives should see that the baby in the pram is not driven too fast or turned upside-down.

The uniting Churches must be accepted by the overseas Churches as equal partners and co-workers. It is only by a change in the attitude of the older Churches that the younger Churches will grow. The autonomy of the younger Churches must be a reality. Only by the union of the several autonomous Churches will the Church of North India/ Pakistan be truly an autonomous Church.

The uniting Churches are ecumenical, because there is a free flow of missionaries from the sending Churches. Does God speak only through those who have the money? Is the catholicity of the Church dependent on the representatives of any particular nation who can send missionaries to other countries? The ecumenicity of the Church must be a real witness through missionaries who have the call and the message, even if they are found in the younger Churches.

Church or Crown-Colony?

The uniting Churches in India and Pakistan must also face the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only King and Head of the Church. The uniting Churches must take their place as workers and real partners with the Churches that have brought us into our present status in life and maturity.

It is argued by some people that Hinduism in Pakistan is not financed from India, nor Islam in India from Arabia, Cairo or Pakistan, therefore why should the Church in India/ Pakistan receive help from countries abroad? My only answer to them is that the Churches in India/Pakistan now, and even after Union, will remain a Holy, Catholic Church. As long as we are in Christ, we shall maintain our fellowship. The love of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit will draw us one to another. The members of the Holy Catholic Church will continue to pray for and help each other until the Lord of the Church has appeared in His glory and power.

The uniting Churches need to grow in the power of the Holy Spirit, and each member must know that we are partners. The older Churches must accept us as their fellow-workers and not as hirelings. The uniting Churches must attain autonomy before union, or else we shall see after much prayer and hope, a union of a few dependent Churches with glorified dignitaries with long gowns, and funds provided by the Churches outside India and Pakistan; a Church in name only, but in reality a crown-colony of various Boards. Let us plan and arrange that we may increase as the Holy Catholic Church, which will be autonomous and acceptable to the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ our Saviour.

"Comparisons between the cost involved for the one church or the other will disappear if each will receive from God the spirit of humility and urgency in doing His will. Such a manifestation of the unity of the church would demonstrate in action the healing power of the Gospel to those within as well as to those outside the Church, and would give an added strength to its mission in our land and to the world."

—Relations between Anglican and Presbyterian Churches

A Baptist View of Church Membership

Rev. Denis Lant

THOSE who centuries ago gave us the nickname of "Baptists" thereby did us a very serious disservice. They concentrated attention upon our view and method of baptism thereby leading people to think that this was our main witness, and still more tragically leading us ourselves to think that it was our main witness. The essential Baptist witness is, however, to the nature of the Church which we believe to be based solely on personal committal to Christ. This view of the Church is known as the theory of the "gathered church" the church being those gathered out of the world by reason of their own faith in their Lord. Our beliefs on baptism follow inescapably from this view of the Church and it is consequently this view which we have to examine.

Institutional Type and Group Type

Since the early days of the Christian Church, two divergent views of its nature have been discernible. Both views have their origin far back in the Old Testament, and it is necessary, in order to understand the present situation, that we should trace something of their history.

(1) The first starts from the covenant relationship of Israel with her God. Entry into the Covenant was by circumcision on the eighth day, and among all the infidelities with which the prophets charged Israel there was never any suggestion that a Jewish male child was not circumcised. In other words, nation was equated with Church. In the time of our Lord this identity was maintained, and was typified in the Sanhedrin where religious and civil law were equally enforced.

Within this context the Christian community was a small movement set over against the Church-State.

This Church-State idea was applied to the Christian Church/ Church as a consequence of the conversion of Constantine. Christianity now became a state religion and in turn it was the pagan groups of the Roman Empire who found themselves persecuted. In this new situation the Christian Church found its theological architect in St. Augustine who in the next century formulated a theology of the State-Church using the scriptural analogies of the fishes in the dragnet, to be sorted out in the final reckoning, and the wheat and tares growing together until the harvest. It has been remarked that it was unfortunate that Augustine, who saw that pride of power had brought down the City of Rome, did not seem able to avoid the same imperial framework in the case of the City of God.

This is the "Church type" of Troeltsch which emphasises the institutional side of the Church characterised by elaborate organisation and subservience to tradition and uniformity. It regards itself as having a monopoly of grace and possesses a reservoir of holiness and faith apart from the holiness and faith of its individual members. It bestows grace through the sacraments dispensed with rigid uniformity through its duly ordained priests. It claims all men within its jurisdiction as its members simply be cause they are within its jurisdiction, and regards the duty of the baptism of infants as universal. It is proposed to call this view of the Church "the institutional type".

(2) Early in the history of the Old Covenant the prophets raised their voices declaring that although a man might be circumcised into the Covenant, he was not thereby essentially a true Jew. The doctrine of the "prophetic remnant" arose by which the prophets taught that the true Israel consisted of those who kept the Covenant from their hearts. They were true Sons of God not because they were Jews/ Jews by virtue of ritual, but because they were Jews in spirit and in truth.

St. Paul took over the idea of the "prophetic remnant", or true Israel and referred it to the Church. The writer to the Hebrews quotes Jeremiah's passage concerning the New Covenant for the purpose of contrasting the New Covenant in Christ with the Old.

We contend that this is the Christian Church as the New Testament knows it and that it of necessity implies that the Church is an event brought about wherever two or

three are gathered together in the name of Christ. This does not, of course, mean that we completely ignore tradition. The fact that there is a Christian community today who meet in the name of their Lord is the result of the continued existence of a Christian community down through the years, a community which gave us the Holy Scriptures and kept them for us and which guarded the Christian gospel that we might hear it. We contend, however, that what makes us the Church is our meeting in faith and love in Christ, and not merely the membership of a duly authenticated and continuous institution. This conception of the Church is founded on the personal acceptance of Christ and faith in Him and teaches that the Church has no resources except the riches of Christ as appropriated by its members. This type of Church is characterised as the sect type by Troeltsch, but in that he uses the term sect in no derogatory sense it is proposed to call it the "group type" group being another word which he uses. The Baptist conception of the Church is of this order and is usually referred to as "the Gathered Church".

Can Baptism alone Imply Church Membership?

Vague terms of membership for armed forces seen ridiculous, and in fact when hostilities break out we very soon see who is actually in the fighting forces and who is not.

Similarly the vague accommodating church membership of the institutional type is only possible when Christian discipleship is not a burning issue. When the Church is overtaken by persecution or difficulty she becomes what she really is. This was the case in Nazi Germany where camp-followers disappeared overnight and the confessional Church became the true Church in that situation.

It is difficult to see what kind of membership a child has who has been baptised and not confirmed. This was apparently the case with both Stalin and Hitler, who do not appear to have been excommunicated. What are the frontiers of the Church on this theory? Is it really the case that a crowd at a football match is the Church despite the fact that many of them may not have given the Church a serious thought?

It has been suggested that Stalin and Hitler brought more complete damnation on themselves because as baptised persons they became instruments of the Devil rather than of Christ. If this is so, the only reasonable policy is obviously not to baptise a child lest he should turn the grace of his baptism into darkness.

In the days when Church discipline was a real thing and districts, and even whole countries, were placed under an interdict and individuals excommunicated, we could at least know the frontiers of the Church, but in the present confusion in the west, this seems to be impossible.

Committal to Christ the Basis of Church Membership.

The Gathered Church is, then, in our contention, the Christian Church as it is found in the New Testament and also the only Church which has any claim to reality in the modern situation. The Augustinian Church may have had some meaning when one could talk of the *corpus Christianum*, but today it is a vague unreal conception.

The argument has been advanced that this only holds in the west, and does not make provision for the mass movements so familiar in the East, where groups often come into the Church because they are led by those whose decisions are for them decisive. They are, it is argued, probably the successors of the 5,000 who were baptised on the Day of Pentecost. Could each one of these 5,000 have understood the Christian faith and been personally committed to Christ? If they were not, that does not alter the fact that such committal was the basis of membership of the Christian Church. "Jesus is Lord" was the credal statement of the Early Church and baptism is never mentioned in the New Testament apart from faith. If some among the 5,000 had a hazy idea of what they were committing themselves to, it does not follow that those to whom they joined themselves on that day would have agreed that a hazy idea was a sufficient basis for membership. Similarly with Eastern mass movements. We might venture the opinion that God would not refuse any soul which came to Him with a confused or vague idea of what it meant to be committed to Christ, but even so that would not alter the fact that Committal to Christ is the basis of membership of the Church.

There is a decisive difference between such a vague but earnest adherence to the Christian Faith and the case of the vast mass of persons in the West who have been baptised but who have less intention of joining themselves actively to the Church than had the parents who arranged their baptism as a matter of social routine.

We cannot probe a man's sincerity and understanding when he says "Jesus is Lord", but we must insist that that is the basis of Church membership and unless he can say it, he cannot be joined to the company of the faithful. None of us understands fully what it means nor ever will be able to, but we must be able to say it and mean it as far as we understand it.

Why Baptism?

If God loves all men and has redeemed all men in Christ, it seems inevitable that if the Church is founded on His unilateral action all men are in the Church, *whether baptised or not*. If the Church is founded on bilateral action, that is, man's response to God's initiative, in faith and love, then obviously the Gathered Church is the Church. Paedo-baptism, however, infers that children are in the Church, neither through such bilateral action nor through the unilateral action of God who by grace redeemed all men through Christ, but only where this unilateral action has been ritually declared in baptism. The baptism of a child, however, can be an action entered into formally or fortuitously, but it is argued that a child so baptised is in the Church while the child equally fortuitously unbaptised is outside it. Yet no one can dispute the fact that God equally took the initiative for the salvation of the unbaptised child and that Christ died for him. What sort of basis for Church membership is this?

Circumcision has been likened to baptism on the ground that circumcision provides the entry to the old Covenant, while baptism provides the entry to the new. Paul, however, often argued vehemently against relying on circumcision because it was a work done by human hands. Yet baptism is also a work done by human hands, though Paul is never found arguing against it. The reason seems inescapable: baptism was always accompanied by personal faith but circumcision never was. In other words, under the old Covenant God's army had been a conscript army which had necessarily failed because of its nature, but under the new Covenant God's army was to consist of volunteers actuated by their own love and faith.

If this voluntary basis is not to exist, but membership of the Church is to be effected by a purely passive rite, it is difficult to account for our Lord's attitude to winning men. He refused those who had not sufficiently considered what they were committing themselves to, and the temptation to win men by any way which was not the way of love was rejected after a fierce struggle. Was this all make-believe? Was our Lord aware all the time that ultimately the basis on which men would be admitted to His company was quite independent of their own will?

Are Infants Members of the Church?

It has also been argued that as Baptists we overlook the value of bringing up a child in a Christian community. There is, however, a distinct difference between bringing a child up in the circle and under the influence of the Church and calling him a member of the Church. We emphatically do the first, but we cannot do the second.

In this connection the theory is advanced that in order to enter the Church at all one must have faith, the faith that "after all and in spite of all appearances Jesus may be Lord", but that saving faith is a gift from God after a man has entered the Church, salvation being a process and not an event. It must be freely acknowledged that the Christian life must be progressive and that the whole necessary process of growing into Christ has often been overlooked by extreme evangelicals. Nevertheless on this theory we must ask, (1) What is the faith necessary to enter the Church and where, humanly speaking, does it come from? Does it turn out to be one of the shifts resorted to by the Reformers in their awkward dilemna? (2) Is the Church a collection of persons some of whom have faith in the first sense, some of whom have lost it and have no faith at all, and some of whom have acquired saving faith? Does membership of the Church simply mean that at some time one was credited with some sort of faith, even if it was only of the kind that had to be imputed in order to retain baptism as a sacrament in the reformed sense?

The Influence of the State Church on Society.

It has also been argued that a State Church has more opportunity of influencing public life and the social order. So far as public life is concerned we are reminded of the schoolmaster who in discussing compulsory religion in schools said that his mind was not sufficiently precise to grasp the difference between compulsory religion and lack of religion. It is contended that a small keen confessional Church can do for the social order what a large vague State Church cannot do. The danger of the "we are all Christians now" attitude is obvious. Where does it end? And what will be the state of Christianity and the conception of Christian discipleship before it does end?

It should be emphasised that Baptist churches are in the same position as any and every other church. They have within their borders—

(1) The inner core of those who are personally committed to Christ.

(2) The wider circle of those who attend, so have some connection with the church but are not yet personally committed.

The question we all have to decide is, which is the Church? As Baptists we say, without hesitation, the first group. But this does not mean that we thereby neglect our children or cease in our efforts to win the second group to personal committal.

If it is argued that the second group are included in the Church by reason of having been baptised as infants, then it seems inescapable that membership of the Church is by virtue of a ceremony only.

(The above article consists of part of a paper read in Edinburgh to a group of Baptist ministers who were studying the Church of Scotland's Interim Report on Baptism, which the writer has kindly allowed us to reproduce.—Ed.)

Anglican And Presbyterian

VEN. T. D. SULLY

MR. Stewart's excellent article in the November issue of 'News & Views' should have led others besides myself to give further study to the report on "Relations between Anglican and Presbyterian Churches". This is now also published by the S. P. C. K. in preparation for the Lambeth Conference and it may be obtained from the S. P. C. K. depot at Delhi. As the "Church Times" remarked, "By far the most significant thing about the newly-published Report.....is that it should have been produced at all. When it is realised that this cautious but none the less revolutionary document is a unanimous Report signed jointly by responsible Churchmen of every school of thought and by leading Presbyterian theologians, ministerial and lay, the achievement is seen to be remarkable indeed." My object in this paper is to bring out some of the lessons which it may have for us in India and Pakistan.

In Mr. Stewart's article he was particularly concerned to draw attention to the differences in method between this report and our own Plan of Church Union and to suggest criticisms from that point of view. I think myself that there is more to be learnt, particularly when we take note of the definite movement of thought and deeper theological insights which the report records. In this the report itself acknowledges its debt both to the ecumenical movement and to the accomplishment of union in South India.

The Meaning of Unity.

(1) There is first the growing recognition that unity is of the very essence of the Church. "One God, one People of God; one Christ, one Body of Christ; one Holy Spirit, one Fellowship of the Spirit—such is the incontrovertible logic of the New Testament teaching." And "hence the overcoming of disunity and the fuller manifesting of the Church's wholeness are not luxuries with which busy 'Churches' may dispense at their discretion, but necessities of the Church's real existence and proper vitality."

This unity is not uniformity, but a fullness and an enrichment, and the bringing together

of separated traditions may, in God's purpose, make a contribution to this. Hence the approach in this report is not so much the thought of overcoming any alleged defects or comparative lack of validity, as rather to see in what ways both episcopalian and presbyterian may gain by a greater sharing of their traditions. "It is towards the greater fullness of the Church that is to be that our eyes have now been turned."

And this unity is seen to be related closely to the Church's witness. "From the beginning of the Conversation it was common ground among us that every step towards unity would be a step towards a more powerful and persuasive evangelism, and that this laid upon us, in view of the conditions in our land a special weight of responsibility."

The Centrality of the Ministry

(2) The report is, of course, largely concerned with the ministry, and regards it as central in the doctrine of the Church. Perhaps, in the context of our negotiations, we should rather regard ministry and congregation as focal points in any consideration of the Church. Yet it is to both that we should apply the fundamental and agreed theological basis,—"The whole Church as the Body of Christ participates in His threefold ministry as Prophet, Priest, and King, by serving Him as Lord. Sent from God it is rightly described as apostolic not only in its faith, doctrine, and mission but also in its order." And the special ministries to which, by ordination, men are set apart, have to be viewed in the light of this wholeness of the Church's ministry.

The Function of Episcope.

(3) Within this whole ministry of the Church is the exercise of *episcope* or oversight in the Church; and this function is not to be taken as a peculiarity of episcopal Churches or restricted to Bishops, but as a necessary element in any Church order. This is not, I think, to take this element in Church life as isolated or in the abstract, as Mr. Stewart suggests, but rather to gain a deeper understanding of it by studying the varied forms in which it has come to be embodied, and thus to check any one-sidedness or inadequacy in these forms. Dr. A. C. Craig of the Church of Scotland has suggested "that at present it is an astonishment to many in Scotland to hear that the Church of Scotland has always exercised, within its own presbyterian system, the functions of *episcope*; and that the Church of Scotland has, always in its own distinctive way, believed in *apostolic succession*." This may indeed astonish many Anglicans also. Yet it is important to realise that, as the report says, "In the Presbyterian Churches, the ministers of the Word and Sacraments exercise a corporate episcopate, collectively through the Presbytery, along with the lay elders associated with them." And such *episcope* or oversight has its place in the local congregation as well as in the Church as a whole.

In an episcopal Church it is the same essential functions which are found in the Bishop, "the coalescence of certain functions in a single person. These functions are: to be the chief minister of the word and Sacraments; to be the proper minister for the ordination of men to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments; to be the chief pastor of clergy and laity alike; to represent the whole Church to the diocese and the diocese to the whole Church; to have authority in matters of doctrine—vested in the collective Episcopate, but exercised in connection with the Church as a whole. These functions together make up the Office of a Bishop, as Father-in-God, with succession in his see and succession of consecration, within the continuity of the body of the whole Church."

There are divergencies here, but a possibility of a bringing together of what is essential and beneficial for the wholeness of the Church. The Bishop of Leicester, speaking at a recent meeting of the Friends of Reunion at which Mr Stewart was also a speaker, spoke of this as "probably the most original insight arising from the Conversations." And it is, perhaps, to Bishop Newbigin of the C. S. I., a former Presbyterian, that we owe a very practical exposition of the enrichment which may result from the bringing together of these divergent traditions of *episcope* in the experience of union.

It may, of course, be questioned whether the mere grafting of 'Bishops-in-Presbytery' into the existing Presbyterian tradition will bring a realisation of what the episcopalian looks for in the episcopate. It is not merely a question of giving it the traditional place in the ministry of Confirmation and in the safeguarding of matters of faith and order, but

realising what some would regard as a special '*mysterium fidei*' in the office of a Bishop both in relation to the whole conception of the apostolate and in relation to the oneness of the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Yet this may be a matter of interpretation, divergence in which, existing within both the types of Church, may not be inconsistent with a real fellowship whether realised in organic union or inter-communion.

The Place of the Elder

(4) On the other hand, study of the place and functions of the Elder in the Presbyterian order reveals the possibility of enrichment within the episcopalian Church, and particularly in the Church of England. Other branches of the Anglican Communion, and particularly the C. I. P. B. C., have already moved a good way in this direction, in the larger place given to lay ministry in the Church. Not only in Parish Council or Diocesan Council, but in the Episcopal Synod also matters of faith and order are not considered without the presence of both clerical and lay 'assessors'; and we in India are not governed by purely clerical 'Convocations'. Yet our own negotiations have shown how much we may learn from the presbyterian and congregational orders; and the very valuable appendix to this Report on the Eldership deserves our careful study. It will serve to reveal new possibilities in the working out of what is suggested in our Plan in VIII, 2 (f), 3 and 5. The method of setting apart of elders might give a stability to pastoral and disciplinary service at the level of the parish or local congregation, as well as providing "the close cohesion of the Bishop and his presbyters with the laity in the corporate responsibility of the Synod." We should note also the importance, in the bringing together of these elements for a real enrichment, of securing the smaller diocese within which the personal relations between Bishop, clergy and laity may be realised and the Bishop may be a real Father-in-God.

The Factor of History

(5) Enough has been said, perhaps, to indicate that in this report there is far more than an expedient for securing a larger measure of inter-communion or a future organic unity. Yet the questions raised by a Methodist in a recent Bulletin of the Friends of Reunion are pertinent. "Supposing that relations with the Church of England were *not* involved, would the Presbyterian participants in the Conversations still regard the adoption of a form of Episcopacy as 'the recovery of an element in the wholeness of the Church' to which the Presbyterian Churches are deeply committed? And supposing that relations with the Presbyterian Churches were not involved, would the Anglican participants in the Conversations feel about the adoption of lay 'Elders' that it was 'the recovery of an element in the wholeness of the Church' to which the Episcopal Churches are deeply committed?"

To these questions, the Bishop of Leicester, relating them not so much to the 'participants' as to the general members of the Churches concerned, said that the answer must be 'no' "History shows that Churches can go complacently on for centuries accepting their own Church order as inevitable. Only when questions of history and geography bring Churches into relationship with each other do they become aware of the tension caused by the separation *in sacris*." That should give us too to think.

The Movement towards Intercommunion

(6) One further indication of movement of thinking will Strike an Anglican who is sometimes tempted to impatience over the attitude of his Church to inter-communion and the "separation *in sacris*" referred to above. It is suggested that "a solemn resolve to achieve reconciliation and unity, accompanied or followed by decisive action with this end in view, would place the whole question of intercommunion in a new light. This question has normally been discussed in terms either of existing separations or of a fully realized unity. But such a solemn resolve would give a new significance to common participation in the Holy Communion."

Here Dr. Craig reminds us that "by the word 'intercommunion' a Scot understands, immediately and particularly, that practice which is exemplified in the invitation always uttered by the minister at the time of communion 'to all communicant members of any branch of Christ's Church' to join with his congregation in receiving the sacrament." To such the actual proposals in the Report will seem "meagre, grudging" enough. But to those who appreciate the difficulties on the

Anglican side, which are duly noted in the report, there is evidence of a real movement for which we may indeed be thankful. Where there can be 'common participation' prior to organic union we are at least getting away from ideas of invalid ministries and sacraments.

The God of Union

(7) Lastly it seems to me that there may be further study suggested in regard to the goal. In our negotiations we have been led now, largely for political reasons, to envisage not one united Church, but two, maintaining relations of full intercommunion. This report envisages a road "from our present state of division to one in which the Churches concerned, having absorbed enriching elements from one another's historic traditions and recognized one another's ministries without doubt or scruple, will not only be in full intercommunion but will also exhibit more fully the catholicity proper to the One Church of Christ."

Obviously there are wide differences in the context of these two approaches; yet the similarity is significant. It suggests a conception of a united Church different on the one hand from Dr. Stanley Jones' conception of "Federal Union" because the real differences which have separated us have been transcended; different again from the centralised organisation of the Church of Rome, and more akin to the autocephalous Churches of the Orthodox.

The danger, perhaps, will be in a failure in the further process of "growing together" for which the inauguration of union is but a starting point,—a danger indeed of growing apart again, if the provision for family liason is not effective.

It remains to be seen whether the method outlined in this report commends itself either to the Lambeth Conference, or to the Church of Scotland; but the report itself has very much to teach us and will be a stimulus to further thinking, not only within the United Kingdom which so sadly lacks a united Church.

BOOK REVIEW

Lest We Forget: *By Leonard G. D'Silva. Sat-Prachar Press, Indore, M.P.* Price Rs. 1. 50.

'Recent attacks on Christian Missionary enterprise and inquiries into the activities of Christian Missionaries in certain parts of India' necessitated the presentation of the larger field of Christian missionary endeavour to a wider public in order to enable it to obtain a more correct perspective of such work'. Mr. D'Silva has, therefore, done a great service by bringing out this booklet 'to present those aspects of Christian missionary enterprise, which have been so excluded from the field of vision of the common man'.

The writer has restricted himself mainly to the magnificient work of the Protestant and Catholic missionaries of Central India. But volumes could be written on the achievements and wonderful services of missionaries-service to the down-trodden, service to the diseased, service to the forlorn and the homeless, service to accelerate the economic and social progress–in all parts of India.

The writer has very ably and understandingly presented the achievements and spirit of missionaries–both foreign and national and holds that these should not be forgotten even when feelings are being stirred up in our country against Christian endeavour as such.

The book should have a very wide circulation and should be read by all who desire to know the truth about Christian missionaries and Christian missionary enterprises in this country.

The writer is to be congratulated on presenting such a factual analysis of missionary activities within such a short compass.

P. Adhikari
Calcutta.

Church Union in East Pakistan

P. Adhikari

THE final Plan of Church Union in North India and Pakistan envisages two separate autonomous Churches for North India and Pakistan. Readers would naturally like to know the progress of Church Union negotiations in Pakistan.

The writer had the privilege of attending the first Assembly of the Baptist Union of Pakistan (Union of Baptist Churches in East Pakistan associated with the Baptist Missionary Society after the division of the united Bengal Baptist Union) at Barisal (East Pakistan) in the middle of January this year, and also of presenting the Plan of Union to the Assembly in the absence of the Rev. E. L. Wenger, Convener of the Baptist delegation on the Church Union Negotiating Committee, who could not attend the Assembly due to a last-minute change in programme. This was the first time that the Plan was being fully discussed by such an Assembly, and the discussions proved very successful. The Assembly finally decided to accept the Plan for consideration, and to forward the same to its constituent churches for discussion and careful consideration.

Difficulties in the Way of Union.

The two wings of Pakistan are separated from each other by a distance of about 1,200 miles and this fact alone stands in the way of a United Church of Pakistan as envisaged in the Plan.

The peculiar position of Baptists in East Pakistan was also pointed out. Together with the Garo, Australian, and New Zealand Baptists, the Baptists from the vast majority of Protestant Christians in East Pakistan. The fact that the Garo, Australian and New Zealand Baptists are still out of the present Church Union negotiations, and would not possibly consider the present Plan at any stage, would take away from the future United Church in East Pakistan (consisting of the remaining Baptist Churches and the Oxford Mission group) much of its colour.

Some also suggested a plan involving Federal Union for East Pakistan, instead of the present plan for Organic Union, in view of the peculiar situation there, or else a more effective and united East Pakistan Christian Council. Finally, however, the vast majority of members felt that it would be better to give more serious consideration to the present Plan, which was on its way to implementation in North India.

The Way Forward.

It was also felt that to begin with two things were urgently necessary for Pakistan:

1. A conference of representatives of Churches from both West and East Pakistan to consider the possibility of a united Church of Pakistan. A suggestion to this effect was also tentatively made at the conference at Pachmarhi in April 1957.

2. Joint conferences and meetings of representatives of the different churches in East Pakistan (including even the Garo, Australian and New Zealand Baptist Churches) to consider local issues and also to discuss the peculiar problems of East Pakistan on the lines of the Joint Conferences arranged in West Bengal.

May we hope that the churches in East Pakistan will be guided by the Holy Spirit while considering the Plan, for implementation or otherwise in that area.

Ecumenism at the Grass-roots in the U. C. N. I.

Rev. K. Yohan Masih

THE United Church of Northern India has for the past ten years made serious efforts to get the Plan of Church Union down to the grass-roots, that is to say, to each local congregation, whether rural or urban.

Handicaps to Study

One of the handicaps in getting a local congregation to read, digest and discuss the Plan of Church Union has been the lack of a suitable translation in one or other of the major Indian languages, for it must be remembered that there are more than ten languages spoken in the United Church of Northern India area. In spite of this lack, the English version has been made available to twenty-six Church Councils, and many of them have made serious and concentrated efforts to understand the theological and other implications of the Plan of Church Union. At our General Assemblies in 1950, 1953, and again in 1956 this was made obvious.

Each of the past three General Assemblies, that is to say, those of 1950, 1953 and 1956, appointed a special Commission of Commissioners to the General Assembly to consider the Plan of Church Union and its implications. These were considered and debated by the General Assembly along with the report of the Standing Committee on Church Union. What the General Assembly had to say has been brought up before the Committee of Negotiators on Church Union.

Practical Steps Taken by the U. C. N. I.

Now that the final revised Plan of Church Union as approved by the Negotiating Committee which met at Pachmarhi last April is submitted for approval or otherwise to the Church authorities negotiating for Church Union, we in the U. C. N. I. have taken the following decisions :

(a) To request Church Councils, in accordance with the instructions of the General Assembly, to send their opinions on the Plan as a proper basis of union to the Church Union Committee by February 28th 1959 ;

(b) To note that the statement on the U. C.N.I. Interpretation of the Act of Unification of the Ministry had received general approval from Church Councils and would be presented to the next General Assembly for final endorsement ;

(c) To request the Church Union Committee to prepare literature explaining the Plan, suitable for adaptation into regional languages;

(d) To urge upon all Church Councils the need for educating the Church at large as to the nature and implications of the Plan and to suggest the following method for doing so ;

(i) Each Church Council to have at its forthcoming meetings the subject of Church Union as its devotional theme ;

(ii) Pastors to be asked to preach periodically on Church Union, and to arrange for discussion of the subject by the congregation after the service ;

(iii) Use of the the literature which is available or is to be prepared ;

(e) To request the Christian Retreat and Study Centre, Rajpur, to arrange for a conference of Ministers and Laymen to study the Plan of Union.

Co-operation with Other Churches

A few of the Church Councils have already purchased at their own expense sufficient copies of the translations of the Revised Plan of Church Union, particularly in Hindi and Urdu speaking areas. Some of the Church Councils have made available to each congregation in its area (gratis) two copies of the translation of the Plan for their study. Each congregation has been urged, wherever possible, to invite for a conference members of other denominations both ministerial and lay, to go over the Plan together, and in three Church Council areas there was already a ministers' fellowship which discussed the Plan of Union on an inter-denominational basis, and we are now urging that this kind of discussion and consultation should not be confined to ministers only, but that the laity should be full participants in such discussions.

All our Church Councils have been invited to make their comments available to the Standing Committee on Church Union not later than the end of February next year so that the Church Union Committee can go over these comments before it presents its report to the General Assembly of the U. C. N. I. when it meets in the fall of 1959.

Writers In This Number

The Rev. C. C. Pande, B. A., is Chairman of the Bengal District of the Methodist Church (British and Australasian Conferences) and Chairman of the Working Committee set up by the last Negotiating Committee.

The Rev. Denis Lant, LL. B, is Minister of Dublin Street Baptist Church, Edinburgh.

The Ven. T. D. Sully, M. A., D. Litt., is Archdeacon of Lucknow and Secretary of the Negotiating Committee.

Mr. P. Adhikari, M. A. (Com.) is Treasurer of the Bengal Baptist Union.

Rev. Kenneth Yohan Masih, D. D., is the Executive Secretary of the General Assembly of the United Church of Northern India.

" Would to God, my honoured brethren, the time were arrived, when not only in heart and hope, but visibly, we shall be one fold, as well as under one shepherd !..... .....If we are spared to have any future intercourse, it is my desire, if you permit, to discuss with both of you, in the spirit of meekness and conciliation, the points which now divide us, convinced, that if a re-union of our churches could be effected, the harvest of the heathen would ere long be reaped, and the work of the Lord would advance among them with a celerity of which we have now no experience,"

—Extract from a letter written by Bishop Heber to Marshman and Carey, June 3rd 1824.

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Printed and published at the Masha'l Printing Press, Kharar, Dist. Ambala
by A. M. Barnabas, Printer and Publisher.